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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Archivists work their magic compiling documents

By John Connor
Gulf Region South District

Tallil, Iraq – The second floor of the headquarters of the Gulf Region South district of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is notable these days for the host of cardboard boxes laying on the floor and being worked on, over and around by two USACE employees.

The boxes, lots and lots of them, contain contractual obligation documents related to the district's mission here of getting the infrastructure of nine provinces in Southern Iraq back in shape after decades of neglect, decay and war and thus enhancing the quality of life of the Iraqi people.

There are some 1,084 contractual project documents in all, according to Elizabeth ("Kelly") Bertoglio from the Corps' St. Louis District Office. Kelly is a paralegal by training and her partner, also from the St. Louis office, Amy Williams, is an archeologist. A third person is scheduled to arrive from the New York District Office in October to assist in the archiving effort.

The purpose of the work is to organize the documents so they can be scrutinized at a later date. Kelly performed this function earlier in the States in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, with members of the Mandatory Center of Expertise for Curation and Archives in the St. Louis District. Amy not long ago used her archeological skills working at Poverty Point, a famous



St. Louis District Archivists Amy Williams, left, and Elizabeth ("Kelly") Bertoglio, right, pictured near boxes of archived Gulf Region South district documents in Tallil along with Lauren Kelly of GRS staff. (USACE photo by John Connor)

Native American archeological site in Louisiana.

Kelly said they were recommended for the project by Lt. Col. Gregory Raimondo, the deputy commander at GRS, and that the work was set up with Kelly Brown and Karen Johnson of the GRS staff.

Karen, a contract specialist from USACE's Transatlantic Programs Center said, "Since [Fiscal Year-end] is a very busy time in Contracting, I did not have

time to physically pull the files and box them up for archiving. I am so thankful to have Kelly and Amy here to help me. Now I can focus on awarding contracts. After September 30th, I will be able to dive in to help the ladies in the archive/storage process."

Kelly Brown, chief of plans, programs and management at GRS, said documents need to be inventoried and organized properly for purposes including future audit and any claims that might arise. He said four years' worth of documents in Gulf Region South had to be archived and that the deputy commander knew the resource to tap in St. Louis.

"I knew these guys had the talent," said Raimondo, who served previously in the St. Louis District. "These are the folks who archived all the projects of Task Force Guardian," which dealt with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. "I'm thrilled way beyond expectations," he said of the archivists' work so far.

Of the "boxes upon boxes upon boxes" of documents now residing on the second floor, Kelly Bertoglio said about 50 have been organized at this time. This is her fourth assignment to Iraq. In her previous three, she worked on mass grave excavations at three separate sites.

Speaking of that task, Kelly said there were thousands of victims of the prior regime at those sites. But she said she and her colleagues excavated "a grave at a time." She said the work was "very grim," and related that "many [of the victims] were children." Yet she added that "we were able to give voices to the victims."

Michael "Sonny" Trimble was the Project Director for the Mass Graves Investigation Team and presented expert testimony at Saddam Hussein's second trial, Kelly said. She said the trial also convicted Ali Hassan al-Majid, aka Chemical Ali, and two others of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Amy lives in a historic housing in Alton, Ill., with her husband, Terry, a concrete finisher. Kelly lives in Troy, Ill. Her husband Gregory is a Corps employee currently working in the New Orleans District as a Project Manager. She has three children, the youngest of whom ran for mayor of Troy when he was 18. He didn't win but came in a close second, she said. Her daughter is located in San Francisco and her oldest son has married and settled down in Troy after completing a four-year enlistment with the 82nd Airborne. Kelly and Amy plan to be home by Thanksgiving.

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